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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA
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TAGS: PGOV PHUM SOCI PINS KDEM SG

SUBJECT: LOW TURNOUT IN LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

REF: A. DAKAR 1173

B. DAKAR 1141

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER OSMAN N. TAT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) On June 3, the people of Senegal voted in legislative elections. Turnout was an extremely low 34.75 percent with the ruling Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) securing 131 out of 150 seats in the National Assembly. A fierce debate has erupted between the boycotting &Front Siggil Senegal8 and the Government in order to spin the results to their advantage. Feeling vindicated by the result, the 17 boycotting opposition parties are claiming a massive victory and have called on President Wade to resign.

¶2. (SBU) On June 7, the national vote-counting commission announced the official results of last weekend's legislative election. Out of 5,000,533 registered voters, 34.75 percent or 1,719,536 people voted. The PDS and its allies secured 131 out of 150 seats in the National Assembly with a dozen other parties securing between one and three seats. Unless there is an appeal, the Constitutional Court will officially announce the results early next week. In the previous parliament, President Wade's SOPI Coalition held 89 out of 120 seats. During the 2001 legislative elections, the turnout was 67.4 percent.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) It is generally agreed that the low turnout was the result of both election fatigue on the part of the voter and the fact that without a robust opposition the results were pre-ordained. While the boycott may have depressed voter turnout, most Senegalese did not support it directly and continue to push their leaders for dialogue. The opposition will continue to claim that the new National Assembly has no real legitimacy but in the end this is of little consequence since power in Senegal is concentrated in the hands of President Wade, who did everything to weaken the very institution for which people voted for this past weekend.
END COMMENT.

¶4. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's SIPRNET Web site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

JACOBS